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Women in Management Research:

Toward a New Framework

August, 1992

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Women in Management Research:

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Special thanks to Lotte Bailyn, John Carroll and Taylor Cox for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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Introduction

Studies of women in management have raised important questions about the glass ceiling (Morrison, White & Van Velsor, 1987), the mommy track (Schwartz, 1989), leadership styles (Powell, 1990; Dobbins & Platz, 1986; Rosener, 1990; Winter & Green, 1987), and work-family interface (Olson, Frieze, Detlefsen, 1990; Sekaran, 1986. When taking into account all we have learned about women managers, what do we really know about their lives? Or for that matter, what can we say about the lives of women who also happen to be managers? There is another critical question to ask: Have only a selected group of women been the focal point of our current understanding of women managers?

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Our intention is first to discuss the deficiencies in the current approaches to the study of women in organizations. Based on the existing gaps in the literature, we will then outline an expanded framework for conceptualizing and exploring women's lives. This framework takes into consideration a woman's life in its entirety, rather than fragmenting it into narrowly defined segments. Our conceptualization acknowledges the differing experiences of women due to their gender, racial-cultural, and class identities. Within this context, we also argue for the recognition of how historical forces influence the roles, experiences and opportunities of different groups of women. If we are to ever to reach a

greater understanding of the experiences of women in organizations, we must begin to incorporate the intrapsychic and core identity factors, as well as the external conditions influencing their lives.

Fox-Genovese (1991, p. 222) makes the following observation: "The American self of our tradition has been white and male, normally northeastern although occasionally middle class or even poor but upwardly mobile." She suggests this prototypical all-American persona has taken on a "collective identity" in general, whereby the identities of men representing different backgrounds and groups, white women and women of color have been suppressed. A similar observation can be made easily in regard to the study of managers. What has been traditionally known about managers pertains implicitly to an exclusive group of white males.

We believe that the framework described in this paper has relevance for uncovering the complex and diverse nature of male managers' lives. Women's lives, after all, do not change in a vacuum. Rather there is an interconnection between the changing natures of both women's and men's lives (Gerson, 1985; Fox-Genovese, 1991). To study gender implies studying both men and women and the ways in which organizations are gendered phenomena. While it is our purpose to call for more holistic paradigms that would illuminate the lives of both women and men managers, in this paper we focus solely on women. We leave the task of

employing the framework suggested herein to other researchers who are interested in the study of men's lives.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN THE STUDY OF WOMEN MANAGERS

Research on women in management has become a significant field of study within the last twenty years (Kanter, 1977; Larwood & Wood, 1977; Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Powell, 1988). The first question dominating early research was: Can women be managers? The basic issue for women was gaining entry into management positions. During the mid to late seventies a second question emerged: Do male and female managers differ in their behaviors and actions in organizations? Differentiations between the attitudes and behaviors of men and women in managerial positions were salient topics found in this literature (Powell, 1988; Henning & Jardim, 1977; Terborg, 1977; O'Leary, 1974; Schein, 1973). Emphasis was on comparative research studies and female managers could only be understood in comparison to male managers (Calas and Smircich, 1989). The third question which dominates today's research focuses on upward mobility and is simply stated: Why aren't women managers getting to the top?

Gender-Centered vs. Organization-Structured Perspectives

It appears that researchers have addressed three different questions over time. Yet a close examination of the attempts at answering these questions reveals that our field is mired in a circular pattern of research and writing

relying upon two perspectives: a gender-centered perspective and an organization-centered perspective (Fagenson, 1990).

A review of articles focusing on women as managers was conducted to examine the perspectives used by researchers. The articles reviewed covered the five-year period between 1986 and 1991 and included the following journals: Sex Roles, Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Applied Psychology, and Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes. We identified fifty-three articles whose studies focused on women in management or characteristics of women as managers or leaders. Table 1 contains a selected sampling of the articles indicating the topic of the research, the sample, the results of the study, and the explanation of results. As indicated in Table 1, a majority of the researchers generally relied upon a gender-centered perspective or an organization-centered perspective to explain their results.

The gender-centered perspective relies on the behavioral and sex role characteristics of women explain gender differences in managerial behavior. Fagenson (1990) and Gregory (1990) explain that in this context, women are characterized using traditional feminine stereotypes, including indecision, passivity, and excessive dependency. Hence such stereotypes work against women managers in terms of their advancement to executive positions because managers

have traditionally been perceived as aggressive, independent, and decisive--sex role characteristics usually associated with men (Horner, 1972; Schein, 1973; O'Leary, 1977; Brenner, Tomkiewicz & Schein, 1989; Dreher & Ash, 1990). More recent strands of this perspective include the notion that there really are differences in behavior between men and women and that the traits exhibited by women are the very ones needed for organizations of the future (Rosener, 1990; Statham, 1987); and that women have discontinuous career paths because they fulfill nurturing and domestic roles (Schwartz, 1989; Schneer & Reitman, 1990; Olson et al., 1990).

A major problem with the gender-centered perspective is its dependency on sex role characteristics in "defining" appropriate behaviors of managers. Sex roles are conceptualized as immutable and not subject to change. The gender-centered perspective creates simplified, binary categories that mask the complexity of the meaning of gender in organizations. In this approach an implied hierarchical relationship exists between men and women with one gender dominant and superior, and the other (women) subordinate and inferior (Scott, 1988). Often tautological explanations emerge within this perspective. For example, when researchers find differences between men and women in their work, the next logical question is the "why" of the differences. This can result in an explanation that

essentially says "because men and women are different".

Perhaps the greatest problem with this approach is its inability to move beyond "blaming the victim". Continued reliance upon this perspective will not lead to enlightened approaches to the inclusion of women at all levels of the organization. While the gender-centered perspective may have been useful for understanding the experiences of women when they first entered managerial positions, its current utility is questionable. Given the changing work force demographics projected for the year 2000, the changing socio-professional roles for both women and men, and the changing work and organization environment, conceptual frameworks must contribute to explaining the evolving status, roles, and behaviors of women and men. We can no longer try to understand women in management by simply examining differences between "men and women." We must use the broader context of gender relations and its interrelationship with other important social relations.

On the other hand, the organization-structure perspective suggests that it is women's positions in organizational structures which shape and define their behavior in the workplace (Fagenson, 1990). Kanter (1977) argued that it is because women are traditionally placed in low level positions in organizational hierarchies that feminine traits shape their behavior. Informal power and opportunity structures in organizations serve to exclude

women. If women were placed in high level jobs, they would exhibit the behaviors that men have exhibited in those positions (Kanter, 1977; Riger and Galligan, 1980). Part of this perspective is the notion that the token presence of women in managerial positions has contributed to gender stereotyping. Therefore, the sex differences between men and women can be explained by their different proportional representation and position in the organizational hierarchy. Recent studies employing this perpective include Mainiero, 1986, and Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1987.

The organization-structure perspective while moving away from a "blame-the-victim" mode, has several shortcomings. Its primary focus on organization structure overlooks the saliency of other important organizational factors including norms and culture, policies, training systems, promotion, and reward systems (Fagenson, 1990; Gregory, 1990). The solution to women's plight in organizations would simply be to replace men with women in senior level positions. Then gender stereotyping and sexism would dissipate. The major deficiency of the organization-structure perspective is its acceptance of the status quo. The structural change advocated is not a basic questioning of underlying extant power and hierarchical systems but the placing of women in pre-existing structures and relationships (Calas & Smircich, 1989). There is also an implicit assumption that women are unable to influence or

decisively impact the organizations in which they work (Gerson, 1985). Women are represented as powerless; it is the position that changes women and not vice versa. Women are seen as passive actors in their work environment. By ignoring the salient interaction between the individual and the structure, we lose critical knowledge about the power that women may bring to the workplace, the ways in which both women's and men's roles are evolving in managerial positions, and whether organizations have changed due to the increasing number of women.

What is Missing in Our Knowledge of Women Managers?

Despite the appearance of an evolutionary progression of questions about women in management, we have not progressed because of our reliance on two limited perspectives. The dominant question today, "Why aren't women managers getting to the top?" gets answered by gender-centered explanations grounded in the deficiencies of women or their sex role characteristics, or in limited structural remedies. The mere phrasing of the question centers the "problem" on women. Instead of asking, "Why aren't women managers getting to the top", the question should be broadened to ask, "Why do top management hierarchies remain white-male dominated?"

If current demographic trends hold, women will continue to increase their numbers in the managerial and supervisory ranks of organizations. Women will be poised to play a

significant role in organizations of the future. While the gender-centered and the organization-structure perspectives have allowed researchers to build a body of knowledge about women in management, as we move into the next decade we need answers to a very different set of questions. The old questions will not continue to be valid in a work environment that will be characterized by increasing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, organizational downsizing and rightsizing, and heightened global competition.

We need answers to the following questions: How are race, gender, and class identities manifested in organizational life? Is a "mommy track" a correct approach for managing family issues, those that impact both men and women in the work place? Do organizations need to be redefined in order to maximize the differing values, perceptions and characteristics women and people of color offer the work environment? What is the role of women managers in transforming the oppressive features of organizations? Why is career success always defined as getting to the top?

As the literature reads today, a woman in management appears out of nowhere, without a history, lacking significant relationships, and without a racial identity. Her only chance to succeed in the work environment depends on her ability to emulate the behaviors and attitudes of men in order to assimilate to predefined organizational

realities. Research on women managers must begin to explore the factors, people, and conditions occurring early on in their lives. That is, what events and significant people in a woman's life history have influenced her attitudes and behaviors towards work? We are missing a clear understanding of how women come to make sense of their lives, one that takes into account the cumulative aspects of their lives.

Problematic to the women in management literature is the hiatus in information, not only about African-American women, but other non-white women and their career experiences. Gerson (1985) points out that research on women, in general, implicitly minimizes differences among them, thereby reinforcing the image of gender uniformity. Race, in most instances, has not been an analytical category in the study of organizations (Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Nkomo, 1992). This situation exists in managerial studies, despite research providing evidence that the combined and interactive effects of race, ethnicity, class and gender have a pervasive impact on women of color's lives (Leggon, 1980; Lykes, 1983; Giddings, 1984; Glenn, 1985; Bell, 1990; Nkomo & Cox, 1989). The idea that theories developed on the experiences of white women managers are congruent with the experiences of women of color has yet to be justified. Of the 53 studies reviewed for this paper, only three examined race and gender (see Cox & Nkomo, 1989; Larwood,

Szwajkowski, & Rose, 1988; and Greenhaus, Parasurman, & Wormley, 1990).

Need for a New Approach

We need to rethink our approach to investigating the experiences of women managers, and the organizations in which they work. A progressive approach would help researchers to move away from the traditionally narrow ways they have used to understand and to interpret women's lives, thereby eventually enabling them to overcome the deficiencies discussed earlier. To illuminate fully the complexities inherent in women managers' lives, we propose three ways of expanding our research on women managers: (1) understanding identity and the compounded impact of the core identity elements of gender, race, ethnicity, and class; (2) building on the biographical dimensions of the women's lives to create holistic, developmental portrayals of them; and (3) incorporating historical forces in the analysis of women managers' career and life experiences.

Identity and the Core Identity Elements

There is a way to avoid the ethnocentric trap in women in management studies, where certain groups of women are relegated to invisibility simply because of their race, ethnicity, or class. Incorporating the concept of identity along with the core identity elements might illuminate our present understanding of women managers. The framework in Figure I presents our concept of identity, and the four

interconnecting circles that consist of the core identity elements of: (1) gender; (2) race; (3) ethnicity; and (4) class.

The four elements are interdependent and interactive, rather than being hierarchical and static in nature. Taken together, identity and its core elements form a gestalt: one element may become figural while others remain in the background. Thus, the relationships among them are not additive, or even reciprocal (Hicks, 1981).

Gender, race, ethnicity and class may not be thought of as having any more saliency than other identity elements, such as profession, age, emotional make-up, or physical characteristics. However, in western civilization the four core identity elements have significant and far-reaching consequences in women's lives (King, 1988; Spelman, 1988; Hill, 1990). Fox-Genovese (1991) ardently argues, "race and gender should, in fact, enjoy privileged positions in our understanding of American culture for they lie at the core of any sense of self" (p. 222).

Discussions on the interconnecting relationship among gender, race, ethnicity and class tend to explain them as elements of oppression. The terms "axes of oppression", "politic of domination" (Hooks, 1990), "multiple oppression" (Spelman, 1988), and "interstructure of oppression" (King, 1988) all describe the core identity elements as oppressive factors that are sources of "pain, sorrow and agony"

(Spelman, 1988, p. 124). Or, "oppression means the absence of choices," writes Hooks (1984, p. 5).

To discuss the core identity elements as factors of oppression solely is to politicize the very essence of the human experience. A political ideology is necessary for eradicating the destructive forces of sexism, racism, classism and other kinds of oppression in society. But a political stance prevents us from accepting, affirming and celebrating all aspects of our selves (King, 1988). For example, "denying the positive aspects of racial identities...ignores the fact that being Black is a source of pride, as well as an occasion for being oppressed," stresses Spelman (1988, p. 124). Elements causing oppression must not be confused or substituted for the richness in characteristics, textures of experience, contours in the ways of life, and the wealth of emotions deriving from one's gender, race, ethnic and class identities.

Understanding the interrelationships among gender, race, ethnicity and class could result in several positive outcomes. First, it would enable researchers to sharpen their analysis of the similarities and differences operating between the elements (Hill, 1990). Second, Hill (1990) suggests that such an analysis would "focus greater attention on how they are interconnected" (p. 222). Thus insights could be gleaned as to what it means for a woman to have multiple and distinguishing memberships within the core

identity elements. This knowledge could be extremely useful in determining strategies for a more inclusive organization.

The Concept of Identity

Erikson is acknowledged by many scholars as being the forefather on the concept of identity (Baumeister, 1986; Josselson, 1987; McAdams, 1988). His definition of identity underscores its complex and somewhat confusing nature:

> It is the accrued experience of the ego's ability to integrate all identifications with the vicissitudes of the libido, with the aptitude developed out of endowment, and with the opportunities offered in social roles. The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others (Erikson, 1963, p. 261).

Erikson's definition of identity, on the one hand, suggests the roles one assumes throughout life, and the ways in which one publicly presents oneself. On the other hand, the definition implies that identity is shaped by the way people and society perceive an individual. He writes of identity as an ongoing process unifying all aspects of self throughout the life course. Identity answers the question of how a person defines himself as he moves through life. For Erikson (1968), identity also encompasses the "whole interplay between the psychological and the social, the developmental and the historical, (p. 23).

Given the complexity of the concept, the meaning of identity is often ambivalent in the literature (Baumeister, 1986; McAdams, 1988; Josselson, 1987). Baumeister (1986), in his work on identity, observed that psychologists discuss identity as an element within an individual, a function of personality, while sociologists describe identity as a set of roles one assumes in relation to his or her environment. For purposes of this discussion, we prefer a definition of identity that can "synthesize both parts, the inner self and the outer context" (Baumeister, 1986, p. 247). As McAdams has suggested, "if identity is like a painting, environmental opportunities are the canvas and colors" (1988, p. 4).

Erikson's ideas and theories on identity were based on the experiences of men's lives; thus factors that might be unique to identity formation and development among women were unexplored. Josselson (1987) introduced the influence of gender in her research on identity formation among women. She defines identity as "incorporating a woman's choices for herself, her priorities, and the guiding principles by which she makes decisions" (p. 3).

Josselson found in her study, "In comparison to men, women orient themselves in more complicated ways, balancing many involvements and aspirations, with connections to others paramount; their identities are thus compounded and more difficult to articulate" (p. 8). What some researchers

describe as the interactive style of women managers may have a direct relationship to the way women's identities develop, and how their identities differ from men.

The Core Identity Elements

Gender is the first interconnecting semi-circle shown in Figure I. As a concept, at the most basic level, gender is a classification system denoting ways in which women and men differ. To exist in this society as a human being from birth means to be "gendered" as either female or male (Fox-Genovese, 1991). More than merely being a biological classification of the sexes, gender includes the societal orientations, values and roles distinguishing women from men, and interactions between them. Fox-Genovese (1991), in fact, defines gender as "a system of relations-specific relations between women and men" (p. 120). Gender is one of the major bases of domination in our society and a powerful determinant of one's life opportunities (Harding, 1986).

Consequently, women's lives do not neatly fit into the adult development or career theories based on men's lives (Gallos, 1989). Theories about women lives must take into consideration the characteristics and patterns that are distinctive to women. What makes the female experience different from the male experience must go beyond biological traits. Much of what is "uniquely female is rooted as much in our cultural, political, social" and economic conditions

(Gallos, 1989). But we must also be careful in our research not to create a generic woman. Women have numerous ways of construing their gender identity; there is no one way to define womanhood (Josselson, 1987). By attempting to strike a balance between common and distinctive patterns for the ways women live their lives, a collective vision of womanhood may be reached without resorting to the mythological "universal" woman (Gerson, 1985).

Insights of the last decade that have increased our knowledge of gender differences substantially. There is a firm conviction among some feminist researchers espousing differences in the psychological make-up of women and men (Miller, 1976; Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan, for example, discovered in her work on women that their way of connecting to others stressed emotional relatedness, in contrast to men who seemed to function by separation and autonomy. Other researchers have indicated that women's lives develop in more complex patterns than men's lives (Giele, 1980; Josselson, 1987). And women structure their lives in unique ways to accommodate motherhood and the world of work (Gerson, 1985; Freeman, 1990).

Race is the second semi-circle found in Figure I, and it is a profound determinant of one's political rights, one's location in the labor market, and one's sense of identity (Omi & Winant, 1986). Its immediacy is manifested in everyday life experiences and social interactions

(Blauner, 1989; Van Dijk, 1987). Pinderhuges (1989) believes the concept of race "must be understood intellectually as well as emotionally" (p. 89). On the emotional level, race is a hotly charged concept for everyone in this society (Pinderhuges, 1989). Why is the concept of race so volatile? The reasons are extremely complex and interrelated. It is the combination of the historical legacy of slavery in Western civilization, followed by a post-slavery period with its significant socio-psychological consequences, and contemporary living conditions and relationships between people from different racial backgrounds.

Pinderhuges (1989) has observed that people - regardless of their racial affiliation - experience a psychological debilitation when engaging the concept of race, causing most people to feel highly uncomfortable and under stress. One reason for this anxiety is that all too often people confuse the concept of race with racism or even outright bigotry. Given America's moral ideology based on freedom for all individuals, combined with the espoused values against racism as well as other forms of oppression, no one wants to be accused of being a racist, nor a victim of a racist act.

On the intellectual level, problems with the concept of race are also clearly apparent. For in the social sciences, definitions of race are fraught with multiple meanings,

causing Allport (1954) to proclaim in his writing, "the concept of race is badly abused and exaggerated" (p. 110). Early origins of the use of race can be traced to anthropologists, who used the concept to classify groups of people based on physical traits, basically skin color (Allport, 1954).

In Western culture, the concept of race remains powerful having acquired significant social and political ramifications. Members of the dominant white community have used the concept of race to create a social caste system or stratification hierarchy based on skin color. Pinderhuges (1990) contends, "the status assignment based on skin color identity has evolved into complex social structures that promote a power differential between Whites and various people-of-color" (p. 71). Politically, the concept of race has been used to reinforce already powerful groups, while weakening those groups with less power in this society.

There are a limited number of studies that provide evidence on the interactive effects of race and gender among women managers. Thomas (1989) investigated the formation of developmental work-centered relations among proteges and the influence of race. He found the African-American women in his sample were reluctant to develop close working relationships with their white male managers because it conjured up in their minds images of black concubines serving white masters. Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley

(1990), in their cross racial study on career development and job satisfaction among managers, reported that African-American women experienced lower levels of career satisfaction, and felt a greater sense of isolation in contrast to white women. A sense of isolation, role ambiguity and alienation was present among the career oriented African-American women in the research of Bell (1990).

Due to the potency of race in our society, it is important to learn how a woman manager's racial identity is interwoven with other elements of her identity. Within this context, we are referring to the racial identities both for white women and women of color, even though women from either of these groups may or may not consciously acknowledge membership in any given racial group. The fact that a woman has low racial consciousness is in itself worth investigating, particularly in understanding same-race and cross race relationships among women; and it has important implications for organizations.

Ethnicity, the third semi-circle, is perceived in the social science literature as being closely related to the concept of race. In fact, Allport (1954) noted, "most human characteristics ascribed to race are undoubtedly due to cultural diversity and should, therefore, be regarded as ethnic, not racial" (p. 113). Cox (1990) believes there is a tendency to mistake race with ethnicity especially when it

comes to perceiving certain groups. He observes that Whites and Blacks are perceived as racial groups, while Hispanics and Asians are perceived as ethnic groups. He continues by suggesting that such perceptions "imply that a group is either biologically or culturally distinct from another, whereas it generally is both" (Cox, 1990, p. 6). To clarify the combined meaning of race and ethnicity, Cox coined the term "racio-ethnic".

The concept of ethnicity refers to the shared cultural characteristics of a group that has evolved over a period of time in response to the group's adaptation to conditions in the environment. Many ethnic groups are often implicitly tied to geographic areas where their ancestral lines can be traced, as for example Italian-Americans or Greek-Americans. Other ethnic groups are identified by their religious affiliation, as it is with Jewish-Americans. For African-Americans, race is the salient factor and contributes to them being a racial-ethnic group (Cox, 1990). Still other ethnic groups are bonded by a common language as is the situation of Hispanic-Americans. In addition to geographic turf, religion and language, ethnic groups may share other cultural characteristics, including holidays, customs, traditions, a common folklore and mythology, a historical legacy, nonverbal communication styles, and belief systems, just to name a few.

Ethnicity involves exploring the varying threads of a

woman's cultural rootedness and her connections to ancestral lines. This cultural rootedness influences the way a woman perceives her world, her feelings and behavior towards others, and how others interact with her. Ethnicity, as Pinderhuges (1989) indicates, "embraces notions of both the group and the self that are, in turn, influenced by the value society places on the group" (p. 39). Membership within an ethnic group is consequential, thereby affecting a woman's relationship not only with members from within the group, but with those people who are regarded as outsiders.

To learn about a woman's ethnicity- a seemingly simple endeavor- may in fact be problematic. For instance, a woman may not be cognizant about her ethnic identity. Within her family system, she might not have had access to family stories, historical records, folklore or traditions that revealed her cultural roots. Traces of her ethnicity were erased in family documents usually by family elders in an attempt to claim a more dominant, national cultural identity.

Another problem in a woman claiming her ethnicity is her ambivalence toward her ethnic group, particularly if the group is the target of negative stereotypes, blatant prejudice or institutionalized discrimination. Emotional distancing and even denial of one's own ethnic group can occur if society attributes low status to the particular ethnic group (Pinderhuges, 1989). There is also the strong

possibility of a woman having membership within multiple ethnic groups, making it difficult for her to choose membership in any one given group (Bell, 1989; Pinderhuges, 1990).

While there are existing studies that explore the combined effects of race and gender among women managers, research that investigates the compounded dynamics among gender, race and ethnicity within this group are scarce. Little is known about the career experiences of Asian-American, Hispanic-American or Native American women. Calas (1992) asserted, "it is rare to find organizational texts addressing, explicitly, Hispanic women as their subjects of interests" (p. 202). These ethnic groups remain the silent voices.

The fo[illegible]n and last semi-circle in Figure I is class. Since the original work by Marx much has been written about class in the social sciences (Marx, 1848/1971). Contemporary researchers have typically taken two basic approaches to defining class. One approach takes a subjective view of class, and asks individuals to identity their class status (Jackman & Jackman, 1983). The other approach to class focuses on the objective reality of a stratification system (Acker, 1980). This system is usually based on education and occupational position (Kohn, 1979). In this discussion we view a woman's class identity as a function of her family's origin, her occupational

background, and education.

Traditionally, researchers have assumed that women derive their class status from their husbands or fathers. However, because of the increasing number of women employed in jobs outside of the household, more recent research argues that in order to understand a woman's class it is important to examine beliefs about gender role norms among women. Beeghley & Cochran (1988) found that employed married women who believed in traditional gender role norms tend to use their husband's characteristics in selecting their class identification. By contrast, employed married women who believe in egalitarian gender role norms tend to use their husband's characteristics, along with their own achievements.

Feminist theorists underscore the need for viewing class identity in conjunction with race and gender (Spelman, 1988; Glenn, 1985; Hill, 1990). In this vein, class cuts across gender, race, and ethnic identities (e.g. working class Italian-American woman, middle class Asian-American woman). Class identification expresses in a symbolic way one's experiences with power and privilege from birth to death (Lockwood, 1966). Some of our most profound experiences with power and privilege are enacted within the work environment or in conjunction with it and these experiences are conditioned by gender and race. Incorporating class in a framework for understanding women

in organizations would allow us to better analyze not only cross-gender experiences but also relationships among women at different levels of an organization.

The Use of Biography

Simply stated, biography is defined as a woman's story - her experiences, the people who shared her life, the roles she played and the choices she made - during the course of her life. McAdams (1988) uses the word "story" as a powerful metaphor to emphasize the complexities inherent in the concept of identity. A life story "connects the past, present and anticipated future and provide unity and purpose ... one's "niche" in the adult world" (McAdams, p. ix, 18). For McAdams, one's story is the answer to the question, "Who am I?" (McAdams, p. 18).

A woman's story embraces the achievements and disappointments, celebrations and struggles, and relationships and times of solitude she has experienced. It illuminates the way in which a woman has lived her life, the opportunities made available to her and the choices she made. Her story also provides insight on her motives, goals and capacities as she move through life (Gerson, 1985).

Much of the contemporary research on women managers implicitly fragmentizes their lives. For instance, a woman can be a daughter, wife, lover, mother, careerist and/or a community worker, but rarely does the literature portray women's lives incorporating all her life contexts. Women,

especially in the managerial literature, are either trying to break the glass ceiling or seeking a mommy track. Thus, a woman's life appears splintered into professional or personal life spheres, but is never an interactive combination between of the two. There is a tendency to ignore the fact that a woman's professional life influences the ways she manages or chooses to live her personal life and vice versa. When framed as oppositional dichotomies - professional versus personal life spheres - our understanding of women's lives becomes a set of fixated polarities, severely limiting our knowledge of the interactive layers comprising their lives. Hill (1988) explains that a dichotomous framework "categorizes people, things and ideas in terms of their opposition to its other" (p. 68-69). In the managerial context, we implicitly subordinate women's personal lives to their professional lives by paying attention only to their careers and paid work related roles. Biography would enable us to grasp realistically the totality of women's lives.

The process of a woman telling her story is also a source of empowerment for her (Hill, 1988). Biography gives women the authority to define their own lives (Hooks, 1984). The process enables her to emotionally enliven her spirit by taking stock of what she has become and what she has made out of her life; she begins to understand her life as never before. Telling one's story is an act of self acceptance

and self affirmation. What a woman comes to understand about the world, her sense of self-worth, her skill level and the quality of life she comes to expect are revealed in her life story. Autobiographies, oral histories and biographies of women's lives offer testimony to this fact (Lightfoot, 1988; Scott, 1991; Campbell, 1989; Page, 1986).

Biography is a powerful research tool, because it can enable researchers to tease out the "different roads" women travel on the way to becoming adults (Josselson, 1987, p. 5). Hill (1990) contends, "each individual biography is rooted in several overlapping cultural contexts...race, social class, age, gender, religion and sexual orientation" (p. 227). Individual biographies when woven together into a rich tapestry create a gestalt that allows diversity among women to move to the forefront so their differences are revealed rather than subsumed under the category of gender. Explicit within this idea are the characteristics that define managerial women as a group, what it means to be a group member and the nature of relationships among them.

Biographic accounts of women manager's experiences would broaden our current insights on the interactive layers, roles, expectations and the contexts in which their lives are embedded (Gilligan, 1980). Knowledge gathered from these accounts would have powerful implications for organizations, helping to sensitize companies to the needs of women, identify structural barriers that restrict women's

career advancement, and provide strategies for organizational change.

Historical Forces

Thus far, we have advocated for two ways of revisioning research on women in management. The first one is to encourage the inclusion of the core identity elements in our studies. The second suggestion is to use biography for creating holistic portrayals of their experiences. The final suggestion we propose is to include of an analysis of the historical forces that can deeply influence women's lives.

The historical reality in which women live their lives cannot be ignored. Sociological imagination, a term coined by C. Wright Mills, was used to capture the larger historical context that contributes to, "the success and the failure of men and women" (Mills, 1959, p. 6). Mills believed ardentloy in exploring the relatedness between biography, social structure and history in the social sciences (Gerson, 1985). History shapes the terrain, the background in which a woman lives; it provides texture in her life. The texture is in constant fluctuation, creating opportunities and resources at times, while at other times diminishing them. Conditions of a historical legacy are inclusive of the subtle to obvious changes occurring in the social norms, beliefs, institutions and cultural patterns of society: history leaves an indelible mark both on the cultural fabric and women's lives. Gerson points out that

"periods of [historical] change increase the likelihood of triggering events that promote and sometimes force individual change" (1989, p. 21).

Women's position in society as meant to work, family and other life choices are gradually changing in our society (Gerson, 1985). "Women today have not simply joined the work force in historically high numbers; they have also shown a growing commitment to steady, long-term, full-time workplace attachment," asserts Gerson (p. 7). This trend in work force participation among today's women is very different from how most women (especially white, middle class women) participated in the work force of the 1950's. But why? Are there historical conditions that help to explain women's changing position in the labor force?

Consider the civil rights movement of the 1960's. It was during this time period that President Lyndon B. Johnson launched his Great Society program. Unprecedented educational and employment opportunities were made available to African-Americans (Giddings, 1984). African-American women, who were traditionally more "work-experienced" than White women, took advantage of such opportunities (Giddings, 1984). They moved out of the traditional female occupations into nontraditional professional positions. Because of the harsh legacy of slavery and the combined oppressive forces of racism, sexism and classism, "urban Black women were prepared to fill positions in an era of increasing

credentialism" (Giddings, 1984, p. 328).

The civil rights movement served to usher in the women's movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's. Middle class White women increased their numbers in the work force as well as entered nontraditional careers. Unlike their mothers of the 1950's, who were homebound and focused their energies on being family caretakers, the daughters of the 1970's "increasingly departed from their mothers' paths" (Gerson, 1985, p. 5).

Both the civil rights and women's movements subtly shifted society's ideas and sentiments on women's roles in the workplace and at home. Without the historical legacies of these two events it would be difficult to imagine what the status and experiences of women managers would be in contemporary society. Another important fact to point out is that history affects different groups of women in different ways. History contributes to the differentiation of life experiences among women. There is a need for researchers to make greater connections between women managers' experiences and the historical realities of their lives.

Closing Remarks

In this essay we discussed several deficiencies in our current approaches to studying women managers and presented three ideas for revisioning the way in which we examine their lives. We call for a holistic approach that explicitly

acknowledges the mutuality of a woman's professional and personal life dimensions. We believe an analysis that incorporates the core elements of gender, race, ethnicity and class are critical to understanding not only her career world, but also other contexts of her life. And we need to recognize the role of history in the study of women in management.

The suggestions offered do not imply that all the ideas must be utilized in a single study, but rather that the components be considered when designing a study and presenting results. We have relied too long on narrow perspectives for understanding women managers' perspectives that have limited our view of women, the kinds of questions we ask, and the solutions we propose for improving the status of women in organizations.

FIGURE 1

IDENTITY AND THE CORE IDENTITY ELEMENTS

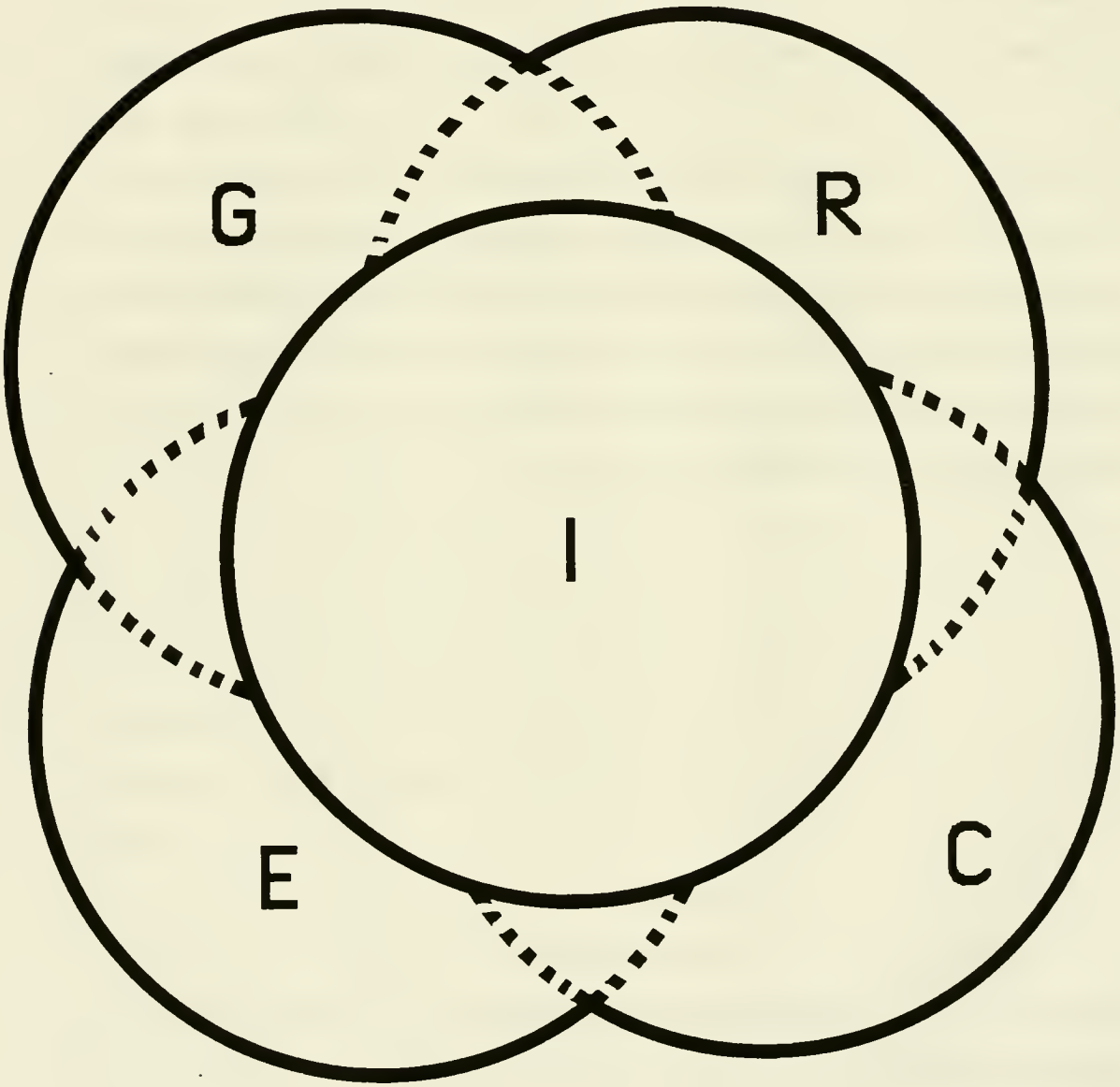

TABLE 1
Selective Examples of Women in Management Studies (1986-1991)

Author	Research Question	Sample	Results	Explanation
Brockner & Adsit (1986)	To explore some implications of the difference in the salience of the equity norm between men and women in reward allocation behavior.	26 male and 25 female businesspeople.	The equity norm was more salient for males than females and salience of equity norms appears to be a function of the sex of both members.	Men are more apt to make internal attributions; or the male sex role stereotype is to foster competence, whereas females' stereotype is to facilitate warmth or expressiveness; or men and women may differ on what is perceived to be relevant inputs.
Dobbins (1986)	How do male and female leaders respond to poorly performing subordinates?	94 male and 94 female leaders.	Corrective actions of female leaders were more affected by the likableness and sex of the subordinate than were the corrective actions of male leaders.	Male leaders tend to respond to subordinates based upon a norm of equity, while female leaders respond to subordinates based upon a combination of equity and equality.
Heilman & Martell (1986)	Will exposure to the success of women in traditionally male occupations mitigate against subsequent sex bias in selection decisions?	147 college students.	Exposure to successful women in male dominated occupations can indeed deter subsequent sex discrimination in applicant screening decisions, but the circumstances in which this is likely to occur are quite limited.	Stereotypic characterizations mediate sex discrimination in personnel decision making.

Mainiero (1986)	Despite structural barriers, do differences exist in the way in which men and women exercise influence?	98 males and females in two companies.	While men and women did not differ in the relative power of the jobs they held, women tended to use an acquiescence strategy to a greater extent than men in coping with their powerlessness.	Acquiescence can be explained by both the degree of job dependency (the structuralist perspective) and the gender of the dependent worker (the socialization or gender-role perspective).
Offerman (1986)	Do strong behavioral leadership cues overcome the stereotypic tendency for raters to perceive women as occupying solely follower roles when males are present in a group?	225 undergraduate students.	Although female leaders were equally visible and were evaluated the same as male leaders, the probability of continued success was seen as lower for groups with female leaders of all female or all-male followers.	Relevant behavioral data can mitigate stereotypic perceptions and evaluations in the individual case, but current evaluations of female leaders may fail to generalize to future performance expectancies.
Pazy (1986)	Does a pro-male bias persist when controlling for performance attributions?	48 middle-level managers managers in Israel.	Even when attributions of performance are held constant, knowledge of perform's sex affects evaluation and treatment, especially when sensitive measurement is employed.	Pro-male bias exists in the treatment and evaluation of females.
Saunders & Stead (1986)	To what extent is the skirted suit portrayed as the business uniform for women?	Survey of 2,576 advertise-ments in general and business magazines.	Business women especially or professionals are increasingly attired in the skirted suit. Skirted suit can be used to generate the impression of competence.	Men have evolved a standard of dress for the business world that consists of the business suit.

Sekaran (1986)	Are differences in job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and mental health a function of career orientation or gender differences?	166 working couples (both professional and nonprofessionals) in a variety of organizations in midwest and west coast of U.S.	Career orientations had a far greater influence on the perceived quality of life and other factors than gender differences. Gender differences occurred in both the professional and non-professional groups in mental health and multiple-role stress.	Wives handle significantly greater number of roles than their husbands outside the workplace, or the level of experienced emotional and physical distress caused by taking on the same identifiable number of roles is greater for women than for men.
Heilman, Simon & Repper (1987)	What is the impact of leaders' selection processes preferentially based on sex compared with a leader-selection process based on merit?	64 male and 76 female undergraduates.	When selected on the basis of sex, women devalued their leadership performance, took less credit for successful outcomes, and reported less interest in persisting as a leader.	Sex-based preferential selection procedures have negative consequences only for women because they, as a group, are unlikely to be confident about their ability to succeed in a leadership position.
Pfeffer & Davis-Blake (1987)	What is the effect of the proportion of women administrators on the salaries of both men and women in administrative positions in colleges and universities?	Published data from College and University Personnel Association's Annual Survey of Administrative Salaries?	There is an inverse relationship between the proportion of women and the salaries of both men and women.	Economic competition and institutionalization which suggest that either because of increases in the labor supply or because of labeling, increasing proportions of women depress the wages of both men and women.
Statham (1987)	Are there differences in the management styles of men and women?	22 women and 18 men managers and their secretaries.	Women used a more task-engrossed and person-invested style, while men used a more image-engrossed authority-invested style.	Men and women approach their jobs differently, but in ways that may actually enhance a woman's job performance.

Winter & Green (1987)	Are there gender related differences in leadership behavior?	40 males and 41 females.	Male leaders preferred to use phrases that indicated a more social style than female leaders. Yet both male and female leaders used language that indicated a task-oriented approach to a significantly greater degree when instructing a female rather than a male subordinate.	Stereotypes of men's and women's roles.
Frank (1988)	What are business students' perceptions of women in management?	202 undergraduate business majors.	Male students were found to be less accepting of women's dual role. Men perceived women managers as being less knowledgeable and possessing poorer managerial skills than male managers. Female students showed a greater preference for a male boss.	Perceptual stereotypes have not radically changed when compared to research reported in the 1970's.
Heimovics & Herman (1988)	What are the effects of gender upon the attributions of responsibility for success and failure by chief executives in an organizational setting?	66 CEOs of nonprofit organization.	Managers, regardless of gender, tend to see themselves as very much responsible for both success and failure, even though negative circumstances beyond their control may be assumed to influence unsuccessful events for both genders.	The role of organizational leadership may overwhelm stereotyped gender roles or that the the manager's role may be gender neutral.

Larwood, Szwajkowski, & Rose (1988)	Is there sex and race discrimination in situations in which normative or unusual signals are given?	143 males & 150 female undergraduate business students.	Participants, acting in the role of managers, indicated that they would be less likely to discriminate in personnel decisions with cues indicating that discrimination may not be wanted or needed.	Rational bias theory which predicts that in the absence of information to the contrary, managers in secondary power positions make discriminating decisions based on beliefs concerning the preferences of those having power over them.
Summers & DeCotiis (1988)	Are there sex differences in job satisfaction?	74 husband and wife management teams.	Females reported significantly higher satisfaction with advancement and compensation than males.	Real sex differences exist since the similarity in the males and females mitigated against other influences.
Wiley & Eskilson (1988)	How do male and female managers attribute the cause for a late and inaccurate proposal by a junior manager and how do they (the manager-respondents) think they would handle them?	228 MBA students.	No gender differences found.	Attributional model of leader behavior.
Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein (1989)	To what extent does the association between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics found for middle managers 15 years ago still exist?	420 men and 173 women managers in 9 firms.	Male middle managers still adhere to a male managerial stereotype while female middle managers no longer sex-type managerial jobs.	Among women managers the lessening of the relationship may be a function of a change in the perception of women in general rather than a change in the perceptions for managerial success or perception of men in general.
Chusmir & Mills (1989)	Are there gender differences in conflict resolution styles of managers at work and at home?	201 managers (99 males and 102 females).	Both genders tended to handle conflict more competitively at work than at home, and used the accommodating style more frequently at home than at work.	Sources of power enabling managers to choose an appropriate resolution style are quite different in the two situations.

Goketepe & Schneier (1989)	What is the influence of sex, gender role characteristics, and interpersonal attractiveness on the selection of emergent leaders?	62 men and 60 women.	Regardless of sex, group members with masculine gender role characteristics emerged as leaders significantly more than those with feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated gender role characteristics.	There is a strong relationship between leadership status and masculine identity.
Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon (1989)	Has anything changed in the current characterizations of men, women, and managers?	268 managers.	Men in general still are described as more similar to successful managers than are women.	Sex-role stereotyping.
Dion & Schuller (1990)	Will a woman who prefers Ms. as her title of address be seen by both sexes as more similar to the requisite traits of a successful, middle manager than would a woman who prefers a traditional title of address for herself?	102 females and 82 males.	A woman preferring Ms. as her title of address was seen by adult perceivers of both sexes as possessing the "requisite" personality characteristics of a successful middle manager; whereas a traditionally titled woman was not.	Women's preference for a title can be a stereotypic cue for adult perceivers.
Dreher & Ash (1990)	What is the linkage between a global measure of mentoring experiences, employee gender, and total income, number of promotions, pay satisfaction, and benefits satisfaction.	147 females and 173 male business school graduates.	Found no gender differences with regard to the frequency of mentoring activities and outcome relationships. However, there was a significant income difference between men and women.	Barriers are being removed to mentoring relationships for women. Men and women differ in their sensitivity to market information about competitive pay levels.

Olson, Frieze, & Detlefsen (1990)	Are women in a female-dominated profession more successfully able to combine work and family than women in a male-dominated profession?	747 women librarians and 449 women MBAs.	Many of the women have not combined motherhood with a professional career and it is probably somewhat more difficult to combine a family with a career in business than with a career in library science.	Difficulty in combining a family and a career.
Schneer & Reitman (1990)	Are the effects of employment gaps on careers of MBAs more damaging for men than for women?	925 MBAs.	Discontinuous employment histories were negatively associated with future income and satisfaction and the impact of the gap was found to be more severe for men than women.	There is discrimination against men not following a traditional career path.
Egolf & Corder (1991)	Are there height differences of low and high job status, female and male corporate employees?	Two studies of 201 and 200 subjects respectively.	High status managerial employees were significantly taller than those occupying nonmanagement positions, regardless of gender.	Observers may assign higher esteem to tallness; taller people are more capable; socialization of taller children.
Goh (1991)	Are there sex differences in perceptions of interpersonal work style, career emphasis, supervisory mentoring behavior, and job satisfaction?	110 males and females in an MBA program.	Women subjects perceived themselves to be less assertive in work situations and also continued to emphasize home life over their career success and advancement when compared to men; women perceived less mentoring behavior, had lower job satisfaction than men.	Negative attitudes towards women as managers have not changed and they still suffer from discrimination and stereotyping.
Covin & Brush (1991)	Are there gender differences in attitudes toward career and family issues?	240 employed undergraduate and graduate students.	Significant differences between men and women in their support for child care, parental responsibility, traditionally defined sex roles, and impact of nonwork issues on work effectiveness.	Work-family attitudes are possibly better predictors of related behavior among women than men.

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